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RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 2061

RHMFSS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY

RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFSS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001850

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, INR/AA, DRL

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PRESIDENT YAR'ADUA TO MEET WITH NIGER DELTA GOVERNORS AND EX-MILITANTS

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (B) and (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Nigerian President Umara Yar'Adua has invited all former militant leaders to an October 9 post-amnesty dialogue in Abuja. All militant leaders and South-South governors reportedly plan to attend. Separately, the British Foreign Secretary and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) congratulated the Nigerian Government (GON) on the amnesty program. An alleged spokesperson for the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) warned that the group would resume attacks on oil pipelines and infrastructure by October 15. Ex-militants continued protests in Bayelsa and Edo states for alleged non-payment of amnesty stipends and other benefits. Recently, 232 militants filed suit in Abuja Federal Court seeking to declare the government's amnesty unconstitutional. The Joint Task Force (JTF) remained on alert in the Niger Delta. END SUMMARY.

EX-MILITANTS TO MEET AT PRESIDENTIAL VILLA

¶2. (C) President Yar'Adua has invited all former militant leaders in the Niger Delta to a post-amnesty dialogue at the Presidential Villa in Abuja October 9. Bayelsa State Due Process Director-General Dimieari Von Kemedi, a close friend to the governor, told Embassy PolMilOff that "every governor from South-South will be there." He remarked that "it will be an issue of too many people wanting to attend, not too few." He added that "everyone will want his interest heard and his recommendation followed," expressing concern that having so a large number of attendees could lead to few results. Similarly, Ijaw Youth Conference President Chris Ekiyor told Consulate General PolOff that the three core Delta State Governors -- Timipre Sylva of Bayelsa, Emmanuel Uduaghan of Delta, and Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers -- would all attend.

¶3. (C) According to Kemedi, the meeting would involve substance and not represent just a publicity stunt. He explained that his boss, Bayelsa Governor Sylva, would

present his state's rehabilitation plan (prepared by Kemedi) at the meeting. He criticized those who had predicted that amnesty would fail. "They were not talking to 'the boys' on the ground like we have been for the last two years," Kemedi declared. He downplayed reports that militants had failed to turn in some of their weapons, but acknowledged that the government would need to follow through on commitments to preserve the peace. A Swedish Embassy diplomat told PolMilOff that United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) consultants planned to attend as well.

AMNESTY ELICITS PRAISE

¶4. (C) ECOWAS President Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas gave a heads up to PolCouns October 6 that his organization would issue a statement praising amnesty results achieved to date. He statement praising amnesty results achieved to date. He commended the GON for making the amnesty offer and the militants for accepting it as a way to promote peaceful dialogue over underlying issues that produced militancy in the first place. (NOTE: Embassy forwarded the text of the ECOWAS communique to the Department on October 7.) Similarly, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband welcomed news of amnesty's successful conclusion during an October 7 meeting with Nigerian Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe, according to a Foreign and Commonwealth Office statement.

SOME MILITANTS REMAIN

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¶5. (C) An alleged MEND spokesperson, identified as Jomo Gbomo, warned that the group would resume attacks October 15 at the end of a unilateral cease-fire. He declared that militants would "burn down" all attacked installations and not limit such attacks on pipelines. There is widespread speculation that militant leader Henry Okah may be using the Jomo Gbomo name to promote his views. Kemedi told Embassy PolMilOff that "Okah is definitely him; it is his business," noting that Okah bought and sold arms. Others have speculated that one or more dissident militants have used the name to spread their opinions.

EX-MILITANTS CONTINUE PROTESTS

¶6. (SBU) Ex-militants continued protests in various Niger Delta cities over alleged failure by the GON to provide payments, benefits, or training. Demonstrations reportedly occurred in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, and Benin City, Edo State, October 5 and 7, respectively. One leader, Robert Okobo, claimed the government failed to pay the monthly allowance of 20,000 naira. Peace activist and Niger Delta Non-Violent Movement (NDNVM) President Onengivya Erekosima asserted that GON failure to release 54 militants from Port Harcourt prison could undermine the peace process.

MILITANTS CHALLENGE AMNESTY IN COURT

¶7. (U) Lagos lawyer Festus Keyamo, representing members of the Niger Delta People's Salvation Front (NDPSF) and the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), including Mujajid Asari Dokubo, filed suit in Abuja Federal Court October 6 seeking to nullify the government's amnesty as unconstitutional. The 232 plaintiffs asked the court to decide whether the President can exercise his powers to grant pardon to a person under the Constitution without specifying the particular offense for which the person has been

convicted and pardoned.

JTF REMAINS ON ALERT

¶8. (C) JTF spokesman Timothy Antigha told the press October 5 that the JTF awaited orders from Defense Headquarters. Separately, contacts told Embassy Defense Attache that the JTF remained on alert and would not take offensive action unless provoked.

¶9. (U) Embassy and Consulate General Lagos collaborated on this telegram.

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